



OREGON'S SENATOR JEFF MERKLEY

The Smith River National Recreation Area Expansion Act

Background

In 1990, Congress enacted legislation to establish the Smith River National Recreation Area (NRA) that protected the Smith River watershed in California. Unfortunately, the boundary of the NRA stopped at the Oregon border, leaving the North Fork of the Smith River and its tributaries, unprotected. The *Smith River National Recreation Area Expansion Act* expands the NRA to include 58,000 acres of the North Fork Smith River watershed including tributaries which contain coho and Chinook salmon, and Coastal Cutthroat trout.

The Smith River is home to a rich life forms – from the diverse Siskiyou Mountains forests to unique plants found nowhere else on earth to ancient, towering redwoods along the lower river. The Smith River NRA offers exceptional recreational activities, including water sports, fishing, hunting, camping, and sightseeing because of the scenic beauty, world class fisheries, exceptional water quality, and abundant wildlife.

The bill is cosponsored by Senator Wyden, Senator Feinstein, and Senator Padilla.

Elements of the Legislation

- **Boundary Adjustment:** The legislation will adjust the NRA boundaries to add approximately 58,000 acres of the North Fork Smith watershed in Oregon to the Smith River NRA.
- **Permanent Mineral Withdrawal:** Like the NRA in California, all land located inside the National Recreation Area would be permanently withdrawn from new mining claims, helping protect this sensitive area from proposed nickel strip mines.
- **Wild and Scenic River Protection:** The legislation will designate 75.22 river miles of wild and scenic rivers, including Baldface Creek, Chrome Creek and nearby streams.
- **Recreation Planning:** The USDA Forest Service will prepare an updated recreation plan (Recreation Action Schedule) to identify specific plans for the entire National Recreation Area.
- **A Special Study:** The legislation will request a special study of streams, fens, wetlands and potentially unstable and vulnerable aquatic habitat areas.
- **Wildfire Management:** Nothing in the legislation alters the authority of the Secretary (in cooperation with other Federal, State, and local agencies, as appropriate) to conduct wildland fire operations within the recreation area, consistent with the purposes of this Act. See Section 2 (d) and 2 (e).
- **Travel Management Plans:** There would be no changes to completed Travel Management Plans on both the Smith River NRA and in the Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest where the expansion will occur.